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NEWSLETTER

101-1236

30 November 1989

Washington DC

THE HISTORIC APPEARANCE OF LECH WALESA before a joint session of the U.S. Congress was mentioned in this letter last week, and I again use the occasion to announce some good news for the community of **Panna Maria** in Karnes County.

As most know, Panna Maria is the oldest permanent Polish settlement in the United States--followed closely by its neighboring community of Czystochowa. Their joint history goes way back--and when I was speaking with Lech Walesa the other week I proudly told him about the two communities and the rich traditions behind them. He was excited to learn of Panna Maria and Czystochowa; his only regret was being unable to visit them on this trip. But I invited him for his next trip, and I told him the Pope almost made it there!

Last week, the prestigious **National Trust for Historic Preservation**, through its Meadow's Foundation, awarded \$1,375 to the Concerned Citizens of Panna Maria. The funds are to be used in the production of a master preservation plan for old St. Joseph's School in Panna Maria.

St. Joseph's School was built in 1868 and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The funds from the National Trust for Historic Preservation must be matched by private donations and are used exclusively for preservation purposes.

The lower floor of St. Joseph's two-story, stuccoed stone building originally served as the parochial school and the upper floor provided living quarters for the priests. St. Joseph's was the oldest Polish school in the U.S., and is now used as the headquarters of the Panna Maria Historical Museum. The grant funds will help identify problems, set them in priority, and provide recommendations on repair and maintenance.

We are happy for the residents of Panna Maria and we know the funds will be put to excellent use. For those in our area who have never seen this great piece of history, we recommend a weekend trip to Panna Maria, the oldest Polish community in our nation.

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THE VETERANS' BENEFITS AMENDMENTS OF 1989 passed the House last week and is on its way to the Senate for a final vote before going to the President's

desk. This legislation has been studied by both House and Senate for quite a number of months, and we are pleased to report that it is nearing the finish line.

The legislation would provide a 4.7 percent cost-of-living adjustment in the rates of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation effective December 1, 1989. This would be applicable to all eligible veterans with service-connected disabilities, surviving spouses and children.

The legislation would also extend the Department of Veterans' Affairs program for providing respite care to eligible veterans from September 30, 1989 until September 30, 1992. It would also establish a new revolving loan fund to replace the old Guaranty Revolving Fund with respect to loans closed after December 31, 1989.

Among other provisions, the bill would establish a 4-year program under which Montgomery GI bill benefits may be used for flight training, and the bill would authorize the Secretary of Labor, during fiscal years 1990-1992, to conduct a pilot program providing employment and training information services to service members within 6 months of their separation dates in not less than 5 nor more than 10 geographically dispersed states.

This legislation continues our nation's commitment to its veterans who served the nation when the nation issued the call--and for whom we are proud to assist in any way possible.

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JOHN E. CONNER was a towering man among men. Born in 1883 in Central Texas he moved to South Texas where he was one of the original set of teachers at the new Texas A&I University in Kingsville. He was Professor of History and Dean of the School. He was a writer, historian, lecturer, and collector. In his honor, the A&I University established the John E. Conner Museum.

On September 1st, John Conner died at the age of 106--after a lifetime that can only be described as breathless. It was with great honor that your Congressman accepted an invitation from the Conner family to speak at a Memorial Service in Kingsville on November 26th.

We were humbled that John E. Conner's family would ask us to speak at such a solemn event, and we wish to say how grateful we were to have had this rare opportunity to speak about a man whose very life defines South Texas. John E. Conner was the link between the past and the present and now we salute him, knowing that we shall never forget his many contributions to our educational system and our shared home of South Texas.

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THE TEXAS GIRLS' CHOIR of Fort Worth has been selected to sing in the White House during ceremonies to light the national Christmas tree with President and Mrs Bush. It was our pleasure to write President Bush and urge his consideration of the Texas Girls' Choir request to participate in this annual event. We are proud of this unique girls choir which has sung all over the world--and will now have the honor of singing in the White House during the Christmas season.

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